

Department of the Interior
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News Release



December 29, 2009

09-152

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Oregon and Washington Receive More Than \$10 Million In Coastal Wetland Grants

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced today the award of \$19.2 million to support 25 conservation projects benefiting fish and wildlife on more than 6,100 acres of coastal habitat in 11 states through the 2010 National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program.

In the Pacific Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Coastal Wetlands Conservation grants will provide \$10.5 million for two projects in Oregon and 10 projects in Washington. The grants will be used to acquire, restore or enhance 2,537.8 acres of coastal wetlands for long-term conservation benefits to wildlife and habitat. Partners in this year's projects include state and local governments, local land trusts, private land owners and many others. Nationally, partners are contributing nearly \$26 million to the projects. In Oregon and Washington, the partner contributions total \$6.9 million.

"There are few actions we can take that are more important to the health of our environment, our wildlife and ultimately our coastal communities and their economies than conserving and restoring these vital wetlands," Salazar said. "The grants I am announcing today will enable us to continue to work in partnership with states, conservation organizations and other partners to acquire, protect and restore these vital areas and the fish and wildlife that depend on them."

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grants are awarded to states through a competitive process. The program is funded under provision of the 1990 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, with money generated from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels. In addition to Oregon and Washington, states receiving grants this year include California, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Virginia and Wisconsin.

The following are descriptions of the 12 projects that received grants this year in Oregon and Washington.

Oregon

Beaver Creek Estuary Acquisition Project – Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) was awarded \$925,000 to permanently protect 91 acres of tidally influenced freshwater marsh habitat and 12 acres of uplands within the Beaver Creek wetland priority acquisition area on Oregon's central coast. These funds will leverage \$1,067,500 in non-federal cost share. These lands are key linkages within a larger project area that extends from the Beaver Creek confluence with the Pacific Ocean to the head of tide. This acquisition will eventually be incorporated into a 1,348-acre conservation area called the Beaver Creek Partnership Area at the Beaver Creek confluence with the ocean. OPRD will own and manage the acquisition lands and will work with The Wetlands Conservancy, Mid-Coast Watershed Council, and other partners on restoration and management of the Beaver Creek estuary.

North Nehalem Bay Wetlands Conservation Project, Phase II – Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board was awarded \$994,290 to acquire six parcels totaling 56 acres at the edge of Nehalem Bay in Tillamook County on the northern Oregon Coast. These funds will leverage \$633,761 in non-federal cost share. The project area contains 25 acres of palustrine wetlands, 29 acres of estuarine intertidal wetlands, and one acre of adjacent uplands. Phase II also includes development of management plans to conserve wildlife on three additional parcels owned by local homeowners associations. The six parcels will be owned and managed by the Lower Nehalem Community Trust and a conservation easement will be held by the State of Oregon. Acquisition of these parcels will support the goals and objectives of several federal, state and local conservation plans, including the USFWS Coastal Program Strategic Plan and the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

Washington

Dungeness Basin Coastal Wetlands Project, Phase IV – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife was awarded \$1 million to protect 39 acres of coastal wetland in the lower Dungeness watershed in partnership with Clallam County. These funds will leverage \$549,150 in non-federal cost share. Thirty-two acres will be acquired in fee and 7 acres will be protected through a conservation easement. The Lower Dungeness River basin is characterized by historical stream channels and flood plain. The basin is recognized as one of the most significant habitat areas for wide diversity of fish and wildlife, including marine mammals, shorebirds, waterfowl, neotropical migrants, salmon, shellfish, and Dungeness crab. Fourteen of these species are listed as threatened, endangered or candidates. Habitat restoration, including control of invasive species and revegetation will provide immediate benefits to fish and wildlife.

Elk River Estuarine Lands Acquisition Project – The Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) was awarded \$1 million to acquire in fee and permanently protect 300 acres of pristine coastal wetland habitat in the Elk River. These funds will leverage \$1,017,000 in non-federal cost share. The land will be added to the 5,000-acre Elk River Natural Resources Conservation Area owned and managed by WDNR. This site contains one of the largest, most diverse, highest quality estuarine system remaining in the Pacific Northwest. The project will help sustain productive and diverse habitats and protect the water quality and habitat for two threatened species (North American green sturgeon and marbled murrelet) and a candidate species, the Olympic mud minnow. Purchasing these properties will remove threats and disturbance from land-use practices.

Grays Bay Estuary Acquisition Project – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife was awarded \$700,000 to acquire 287 acres of tidal wetland marsh on the Lower Columbia River at the mouth of Deep and Grays River for protection of estuarine habitat for wintering waterfowl and threatened salmon and other marine fish. These funds will leverage \$320,000 in non-federal cost share. The project protects rearing habitat for Columbia River threatened salmon, which have declined to approximately 10 percent of their historic levels. The Lower Columbia River Salmon Recovery Plans identify the need to protect these estuaries for salmon recovery efforts and the Lower Columbia Pacific Coast Joint Venture has identified the emergent marsh targeted in this proposal as a priority for protection and acquisition. All of the lands in the acquisition area will remain open for public use, including hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing.

Hoquiam Surge Plain Acquisition Project, Phase II – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife was awarded \$950,000 to protect 644 acres and six river miles of high quality coastal surge plain and adjacent spruce forest, in partnership with Chehalis Basin Land Trust, Cascade Land Conservancy and Grays Harbor Audubon Society. These funds will leverage \$390,000 in non-federal cost share. This project is the second phase of an effort to conserve the Grays Harbor and Chehalis River Basin ecosystem. Through a 2009 National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant the applicants acquired 714 acres on the west branch of the Hoquiam River. Phase II will bring 75 percent of the Hoquiam Surge Plain into conservation ownership. Grays Harbor is one of the largest, most important estuarine

habitats on the Pacific coast and conservation of the Chehalis River Basin is the focus of the USFWS Chehalis Fishery Restoration Program.

Island and Loomis Lakes Conservation Project – Washington Department of Ecology, partnering with Columbia Land Trust, was awarded \$1 million to acquire 125 acres of highly threatened, declining coastal wetlands, riparian areas and associated mature and old growth conifer forest on the Long Beach Peninsula, a coastal barrier between the Pacific Ocean and Willapa Bay in southwest Washington. These funds will leverage \$476,000 in non-federal cost share. These lands will be added to the 890-acre Island and Loomis Lakes Conservation Area. The project area contains one of the largest interdunal freshwater wetland complexes in North America and supports over 25 sensitive habitat communities and at-risk species. This project will support the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the Partners in Flight Plan.

Kiket Island Shoreline Acquisition Project, Phase II – Washington Parks and Recreation Commission was awarded \$1 million to acquire a 12.4 acre waterfront parcel on Kiket Island in Puget Sound and a 10.4 acre wetland complex on Fidalgo Island in Skagit County. These funds will leverage \$1,079,175 in non-federal cost share. The parcels provide excellent habitat for endangered juvenile salmon and other fish and bird species. The Kiket parcel is surrounded by native eelgrass and contains abundant tidelands with some light gravel and sand beaches that support a diversity of wildlife. Kiket Island is Washington State Parks number one acquisition priority. The Commission is working with the Trust for Public Lands and other non-profit and government agencies to secure funding to purchase Kiket Island. In 2009, the Commission received a National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant to fund Phase I.

Quilcene Bay/Donovan Creek Coastal Stream Acquisition and Restoration – Washington Department of Ecology, in partnership, partnering with Jefferson County Land Trust, was awarded \$701,250 to permanently protect and restore 76 acres of the lower Donovan Creek coastal ecosystem in upper Quilcene Bay, Hood Canal. These funds will leverage \$318,750 in non-federal cost share. The project actions will restore almost a mile of stream habitat, 15 acres of riparian habitat, and acquire 43 acres of coastal wetland, riparian and upland habitat. The protection and restoration of the Donovan Creek coastal ecosystem is key to completing the ecosystem-scale restoration of the entire upper Quilcene Bay delta and tidal marsh habitat complex. The project will benefit all seven species of native salmonids, numerous shorebirds and neotropical migrants.

Smuggler's Slough Estuary Restoration, Phase II – Washington Department of Ecology, partnering with the Lummi Indian Nation, was awarded \$700,500 to permanently protect 160 acres of Nooksack River estuarine wetlands and restore the tidal wetlands on and adjacent to this land. These funds will leverage \$467,000 in non-federal cost share. This project includes the construction of a setback levee in the Kwina Slough area, north of Smuggler's Slough and re-route agricultural drainage to allow the project area to be flooded without negatively affecting adjacent farmland. Numerous estuary-dependent fish, migratory birds, and other wildlife species, including several species of salmonids, will benefit from protection of this site. This project supports Salmon Recovery Board's Salmon Recovery Plan, the Washington Component of the Pacific Coast Joint Venture Strategic Plan, and the Northern Pacific Coast Regional Shorebird Conservation Plan.

Stanley Point/South Willapa Bay Conservation – Washington Department of Ecology was awarded \$1 million to permanently protect a total of 705 acres of high quality wetlands including estuarine emergent salt marsh, eelgrass meadows, mud flats, marsh scrub-shrub and freshwater forested wetlands. These funds will leverage \$559,000 in non-federal cost share. As part of this project five miles of pristine estuarine shoreline in Southern Willapa Bay will also be permanently protected. Approximately 172 acres will be acquired in fee and 533 acres through conservation easements. Willapa Bay is one of the most productive areas for oyster cultivation in the Pacific Northwest and home to the largest commercial shellfish beds in Washington. The project area is adjacent to the 15,000-acre Willapa Bay National Wildlife Refuge and The Nature Conservancy's 7,000-acre Ellsworth Creek Preserve. The project also supports the goals of the Pacific Region Partners and Fish and Wildlife and Coastal Program Strategic Plan.

Totten Inlet Estuarine Habitat Acquisition – Washington Department of Ecology, partnering with Capitol Land Trust, USFWS, Pacific Coast Joint Venture, the Squaxin Island Tribe, Taylor Shellfish Farms, and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, was awarded \$531,745 to acquire 20 acres of forested and coastal habitat on the eastern shore of Totten Inlet in northwest Thurston County. These funds will leverage \$286,440 in non-federal cost share. The project area includes an intact pocket estuary, 1,400 feet of undeveloped coastal shoreline, forested and estuarine wetlands, a pocket estuary with bay mouth spit, and feeder bluffs. Totten Inlet has been identified by conservation organizations and agencies as a high priority for protection due to the quality of estuarine and nearshore habitat and ecological diversity, and its protection is identified as a priority action in 20 conservation and recovery plans.

A complete list of projects funded by the 2010 grant program can be found online at:
<http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants/index.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.